

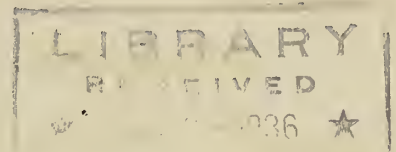
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HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

Greens - Wild and Tame



A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. William R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Thursday, April 23, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: Here with us today are two of your well-known friends, Ruth Van Deman and Mr. Beattie. They're going to pool their time, they tell me, to talk on a very springlike subject. Now, following the good old rule of ladies first, Miss Van Deman, I'll let you pick it up from there.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Salisbury. This is a request program today. The suggestion came from a listener up in Norwalk, Connecticut, sometime ago. It was so long ago maybe she thinks we've forgotten all about it, but we haven't. Let me read you her letter: "Will you kindly consider giving your radio audience knowledge of the value of all good wild edible leaves and shoots, such as mustard leaves, sorrel, purslane or pusley, pigweed or lamb's-quarters, dandelion, watercress, poke shoots, dock, and others. These young tender leaves are good raw in salad as well as cooked. I feel where people have the time they might learn about these wild edible foods by library books or by contact with gardeners who know them".

Well, Mr. Beattie, I guess you must belong among the "gardeners who know them."

MR. BEATTIE: Yes, Miss Van Deman, I do feel pretty well acquainted with greens - both wild and tame. As a gardener I'm strongly in favor of growing a supply of greens right in your own garden. But, I can think of at least a dozen wild plants that may be used for greens and some of them are might good, especially in the early spring when green foods are a little scarce for some of us. One of the familiar sights here around Washington at this time of the year is to see the old negro mammies with their baskets and their caseknives going through the parks and the unimproved land very carefully cutting out every dandelion, upland cress, and poke sprout that they can find and carrying them home to cook for greens.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Dandelions are even cultivated nowadays, aren't they?

MR. BEATTIE: Yes, but that's not a new custom. Dandelions have been grown in gardens for at least a hundred years. But it is only recently that such plants as upland cress and lamb's-quarters or pigweed have been added to our list of cultivated garden crops. We list 22 crops in our Farm Garden bulletin that are cultivated and used as greens, either raw or cooked.

MISS VAN DEMAN: The garden-grown greens are more tender and not so strong flavored as the wild ones, aren't they?

MR. BEATTIE: Yes, as a general rule they are better and certainly much easier to gather. Take dandelions, for example. As they grow wild there is great variation in the character of the different plants. Some are tough and fibrous, others are more succulent and tender.

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MISS VAN DEMAN: Mr. Beattie, what is your favorite kind of spring greens?

MR. BEATTIE: Spinach, cabbage, turnip greens, field cress, poke sprouts, asparagus, lamb's-quarters, mustard, beet tops, dandelion, - - -

MISS VAN DEMAN: Hold on. I said what one, not which dozen.

MR. BEATTIE: Well, you see I like them all. If I had to choose one, I think I'd say spinach. It can be grown in the garden over a longer period than most of the crops that are used for greens. Cabbage is the only green leafy vegetable that can be had over a longer period than spinach, and our markets are generally plentifully supplied with both. Sprouting broccoli, a member of the cabbage family, has recently become quite popular socially and otherwise, as an addition to our list of greens. It came to us from southern Italy, and is known as calabrese, or sprouting broccoli. It was in 1927, I think, that I saw the first sprouting broccoli on our markets, but now it is offered practically every month of the year, big green bunches of the stems and undeveloped flower heads.

MISS VAN DEMAN: The nutritionists welcome every new addition to our list of leafy green vegetables. You know they never cease to extol the virtues of green leaves in the diet all the year around. They say we would do well to eat some kind of a green leafy vegetable every day, either cooked or raw in a salad. The thinner and greener the leaves, the richer they are in vitamin A. It's been some time since I've mentioned this growth-promoting, health-protecting vitamin A, but the need for it in our bodies never ceases winter or summer, spring or fall. Even though we can store it up to some extent, we have to keep replenishing the supply.

MR. BEATTIE: And don't the scientists say now that old-fashioned spring fever was really the result of a winter diet that didn't have enough vitamins?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, partly. I must say though that vitamins or no vitamins it's hard for me to avoid a touch of spring fever when I sit by a lilac bush in the warm spring sunshine as I did down in Virginia last Sunday. But to keep to our subject of greens, Mr. Beattie, there always seems to be a dearth of them right in the summer.

MR. BEATTIE: Yes, it is difficult to maintain a supply of greens in the home garden through the middle of the summer. In the spring when the days and nights are relatively cool and the soil contains plenty of moisture, the crops we use for greens grow fine. But in midsummer when the weather is hot and dry, it's almost impossible to grow them. Swiss chard and New Zealand spinach (which isn't a true spinach at all) are about the only ones that fill this gap. Speaking of spinach, Miss Van Deman, haven't I heard that the nutritionists were going back a little on spinach?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, to some extent. Some of the recent experiments have shown that the calcium and other minerals in spinach aren't as well utilized by the body as was once thought. But there's been no debunking of spinach as a vitamin-rich food. It still holds high place along with the other green leafy vegetables as sources of vitamin A, B, C, and G.

MR. BEATTIE: So the younger generation will still have to eat its spinach?

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use more water than you do with the leafy greens. Every rule has its exceptions of course.

MR. BEATTIE: That is true Miss Van Deman, but I'd like to suggest one rule that really has very few exceptions, and that is, it pays to grow a supply of greens in your own garden. There is still plenty of time for planting spinach in northern gardens, in fact, spinach can be grown with fair success every month of the summer and fall in northern gardens, provided moisture conditions can be controlled. New Zealand spinach and Swiss chard may be planted a little later when the ground warms a trifle. Southern gardeners may plant New Zealand spinach in their gardens now and if the growing tips are kept cut and the plants not allowed to form seed they will produce greens during the entire summer. The real point is to have some kind of a leafy green vegetable available at all times.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, speaking for your correspondent up in Connecticut, and for all the rest of this audience, we thank you, Miss Van Deman, and you, Mr. Beattie, for this interesting discussion of spring greens - wild and tame.

Aunt Sammy's Radio Recipes Revised has 85 recipes for cooking vegetables. Superintendent of Documents, 15¢.